



Borgring – The Battle Over a Name

Special Feature - Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

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Published in:

UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES Information Bulletin

Publication date:

2015

Document version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Document license:

[Unspecified](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Gammeltoft, P. (2015). Borgring – The Battle Over a Name: Special Feature - Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage. *UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES Information Bulletin*, 48, 5-6.



United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN)

GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

INFORMATION BULLETIN

NO. 48 MAY 2015

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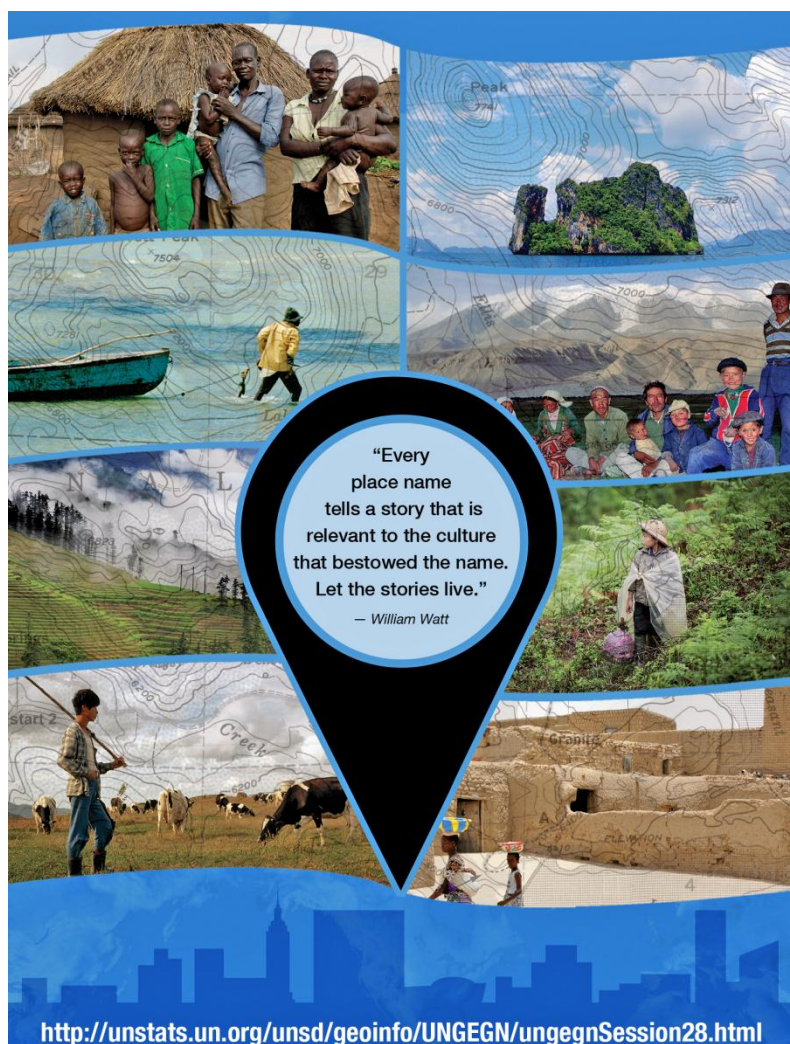
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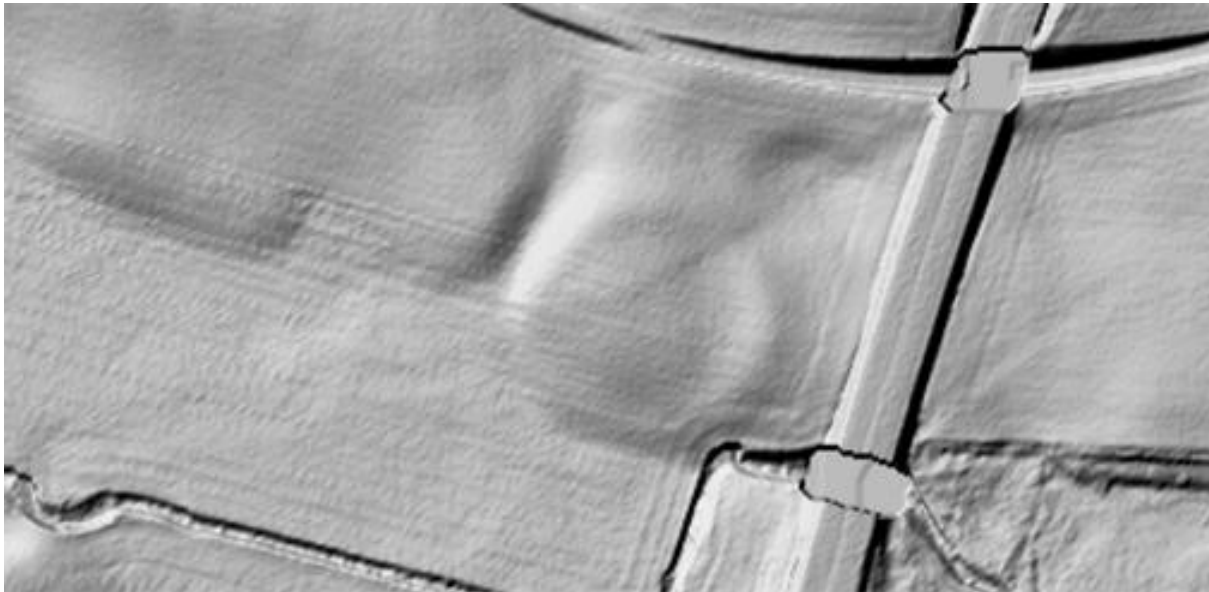




Special Feature

Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

Borgring – The Battle Over a Name



The contours of Borgring are seen clearly in the Danish Cultural Heritage Agency's relief map, based on laser scans.

An archaeological sensation was announced on 5 September 2014 – namely the discovery of a hitherto unknown Viking-Age ring fort of the so-called Trelleborg-type. Only four other ring forts of this type are known from Denmark, so the discovery of a fifth one was one which did not only make headlines in the Danish press but was also widely published internationally. For instance, it was the most read, shared and commented piece of news on the online version of the English newspaper, The Telegraph – and the archaeologists who found the final evidence of the ring fort's existence, seemed to be spending more time in the media than on the excavation in the ensuing weeks.

This discovery spurred a lot of discussion in the social media - Facebook groups started locating ring-shaped formations throughout Denmark, but - surprisingly - one of the greatest subjects circulating was that of the name of the locality. At the outset, the ring fort had been launched under the name of *Vallø Borgring*, as the ring fort is located

on land belonging to the Manor of Vallø Stift. However, this name was obviously too misleading for many people. Among the objections were the fact that Vallø was situated more than 10 km away from the ring fort and actually situated on land of the manor of Gammel Lellingegård - a subsidiary of Vallø Stift. Facebook groups emerged disputing the name and even the Name Research Section published an article on the locality and the known names throughout history. Other naming suggestions ranged from *Borgringen ved Lellinge* to simply *Borgring* - or in a historicising form *Borrering*.

The problem was that there were a number of diverging interests in the naming squabble. Such a discovery has a huge potential for generating revenue to the local area, thus the wish for a more locally founded name. The Viking Age generates a lot of interest both in Denmark and in the rest of the world - just consider the huge Viking exhibition running in China right now.



To remedy the growing concerns over the name of the locality - and to stop the ever growing name suggestions, the Danish Agency for Culture decided to give the locality a single name form once and for all. The agency's considerations included historical names of the locality and bestowing a name which was in key with the four other known ring forts of the Viking Age: *Aggersborg*, *Fyrkat*, *Nonnebakken* and *Trelleborg*. At the same time, the agency had to tread carefully in order not to certify a name which lend too much bias towards the previously published suggestions.

The ruling of Danish Agency for Culture was to bestow the locality with the name *Borgring*, following the modern Danish spelling conventions. This decision put a stop to much of the media discussions over the name of the ring fort - although there are still a lot of lobbying for the historicising form *Borrering* going on still.

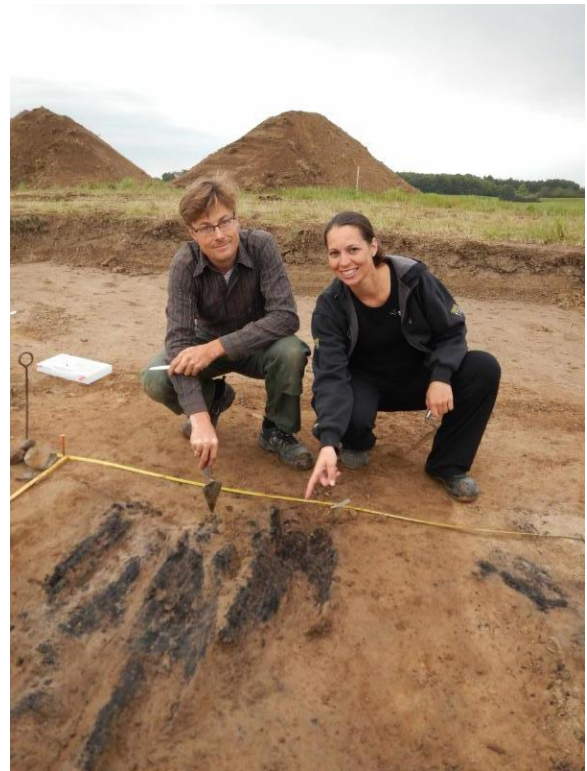
This debate and the ensuing ruling by the Danish Agency for Culture over the name of *Borgring* show how important it is to have a single, uniform name of cultural heritage localities. All we need now, is the Danish Agency for Culture bringing the matter up at the next meeting of the Danish Place-Name Commission so that the name can receive its final authorisation.

DENMARK

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Professor Søren Sindbæk and excavation manager Nanna Holm show their discovery to the world press. Picture courtesy of Dansk Borgcenter.



Aggersborg, the largest Viking-Age ring fort in Denmark